



DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS  
*Canandaigua VA Medical Center*  
400 Fort Hill Avenue, Canandaigua, NY 14424

## NEWS RELEASE

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Canandaigua VA Medical Center Steers Vets toward Safe Driving**

With motor vehicle crashes being a leading cause of deaths among combat veterans during the first years after their return home, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), the Department of Transportation (DOT) and the Department of Defense (DOD) are working together to reduce these accidents.

The **Veterans' Safe Driving Initiative** strives to increase awareness of motor vehicle crashes among veterans and the importance of safe driving, seatbelt and helmet usage, and other measures. To reach out to veterans and their families, VA has created a national educational program using the Department's network of medical centers, community clinics, drop-in counseling centers (Vet Centers), and veteran's benefits offices. The initiative also includes outreach to mobilize national veterans service organizations; the nation's governors and state police, safety officers, and state highway safety officials; and the private sector - including employers; automobile, motorcycle and sports vehicle dealers and manufacturers; the motor vehicle insurance industry; and driving and motorcycle racing enthusiasts' organizations. NASCAR legend and safe driving advocate, Richard Petty, is an active partner in the initiative.

"Richard Petty Driving Experience (RPDE) is thrilled to be working with VA, DOT and DOD on such a worthwhile project to save veterans' lives," said NASCAR legend Richard Petty. "We want to bring more attention to the continuing problem of veteran drivers and their safety through our involvement. Last year alone, RPDE operated over 1,100 event days, ran almost 1 million miles on track and had a staff of professional drivers. We have the commitment, the knowledge to teach, and the infrastructure to take this initiative to many markets."

**- More -**

According to the Department of Transportation, motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for all Americans between the ages of eight through 34. Men constitute about 70 percent of all traffic deaths. In the past decade, both deaths and injuries from motor vehicle crashes have gone down in the United States, due to increases in seat-belt use and decreases in alcohol involvement, among other factors.

Nonetheless, motor vehicle accidents remain a major concern in the military and among veterans as the greatest cause of accidental fatalities. Several studies have reported an increase in post-deployment deaths among military personnel who served in a combat zone compared to their non-deployed counterparts, who are in the military but not deployed to a war, after both the Vietnam War and the 1991 Gulf War. Preliminary evidence also indicates this is the case with veterans from the Global War on Terror.

For more information or to schedule a presentation of the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Transportation's **Veterans Safe Driving Initiative**, please contact **Dianne Moroz, Canandaigua VA Medical Center Patient Safety Manager at (585)393-7317.**

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